

## Pilgrim Nuclear Plant Ranked Among Worst

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The Pilgrim I nuclear plant in Plymouth racked up 54 "mishaps" in 1981 and was ranked "below average" in overall performance by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), according to a report just released by Critical Mass Energy Project, a Washington, D.C. organization.

"Our suspicions are confirmed: Boston Edison is running a plant that jeopardizes the lives of citizens," says Michael Ernst, energy advocate for the Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group (MASSPIRG). "One accident a week at Pilgrim is an atrocious record -- especially since a nuclear accident could be catastrophic."

The Critical Mass study, "Nuclear Power Safety Report: 1981," was based on documents obtained from the NRC. Over 4,000 mishaps at nuclear plants around the country were documented in 1981, of which 140 were judged to be especially serious. "The day-to-day operation of nuclear reactors is plagued by equipment failures, human errors, and design defects," the report concludes. "Without major changes, it is just a matter of time before another serious accident."

Among the finds on the Pilgrim I plant were these:

- \*35 of 54 mishaps were due to equipment failure and 12 to human error;

- \*Among single-reactor sites, Pilgrim's worker safety record was the third worst in the nation. In all, workers received 1,836 person-rem of radiation last year at the Plymouth site -- the equivalent of more than 90,000 chest x-rays;

- \*One of 1981's most alarming nuclear mishaps occurred at Pilgrim in August when the growth of mussels in cooling system pipes rendered a heat exchanger "inoperable." An internal NRC memo admits the situation would have been a safety hazard during an accident;

- \*A bomb threat against Pilgrim was received in February of 1981, pointing up how nuclear plants are "unusually vulnerable to terrorist attack and sabotage," according to the report's authors.

"These problems are by no means isolated," according to MASSPIRG's Ernst. "Rather, they have to be understood in the context of Pilgrim's safety violations uncovered early this year which were so egregious that the NRC slapped Boston Edison with the largest fine ever levied on a nuclear plant. While the new report documents the inherent danger of nuclear power, there is special reason for Massachusetts residents to be alarmed. There is serious risk with any plant, but Pilgrim I is among the worst."